Remarks

Further and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendment and following remarks.

Thus, in item 1 on page 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner states that the two step intermediate heating of the present invention is met by the prior art because the intermediate heating could be first performed at 1100°C and then performed at 1100°C, or first performed at 1099°C and then performed at 1101°C. The Examiner takes the position that this close approximation of the two heating ranges does not differentiate from the prior art, and secondly, merely repeating a step for the known additional benefit, lacking an unexpected result, does not define over the prior art.

The Examiner's comments in this regard have been rendered moot by the amendment to claim 1 set forth above, requiring that the second step heat treatment is performed at 1100 to 1250°C and at least 50°C higher than the first step temperature. This amendment is supported by the disclosure from page 6, line 7 to page 7, line 7 of the specification, as well as the intermediate heat treatment temperatures in Table 2 on page 11 of the specification.

Applicants take the position that these amendments should be entered even though they are being submitted after a final rejection, since they more particularly define a separation of temperatures for the first step heat treatment and the second step heat treatment.

The rejection of claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Jones is respectfully traversed.

Similarly to item 1 on page 2 of the Office Action, in setting forth this prior art rejection, the Examiner takes the position that the splitting of the intermediate heating into two steps, as close as both reading upon 1100°C or wherein the first is 1100°C and the second is 1101°C, does not distinguish from the prior art without a showing of unexpected results.

However, this has been overcome by the amendment to claim 1 providing a separation of at least 50°C between the first step heat treatment temperature and the second step heat treatment temperature, thus clearly distinguishing the present invention

from Jones. That is, referring to the Examiner's discussion of this reference, Jones fails to suggest that if the heat treatment is repeated, the repeated heat treatment is conducted at a temperature at least 50°C higher then the original heat treatment.

For these reasons, the presently claimed invention is considered to be clearly patentable over the Jones reference.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, it is submitted that the ground of rejection set forth by the Examiner has been overcome, and that the application is in condition for allowance. Such allowance is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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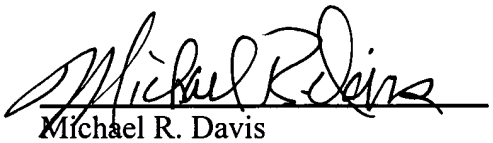
By: 

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